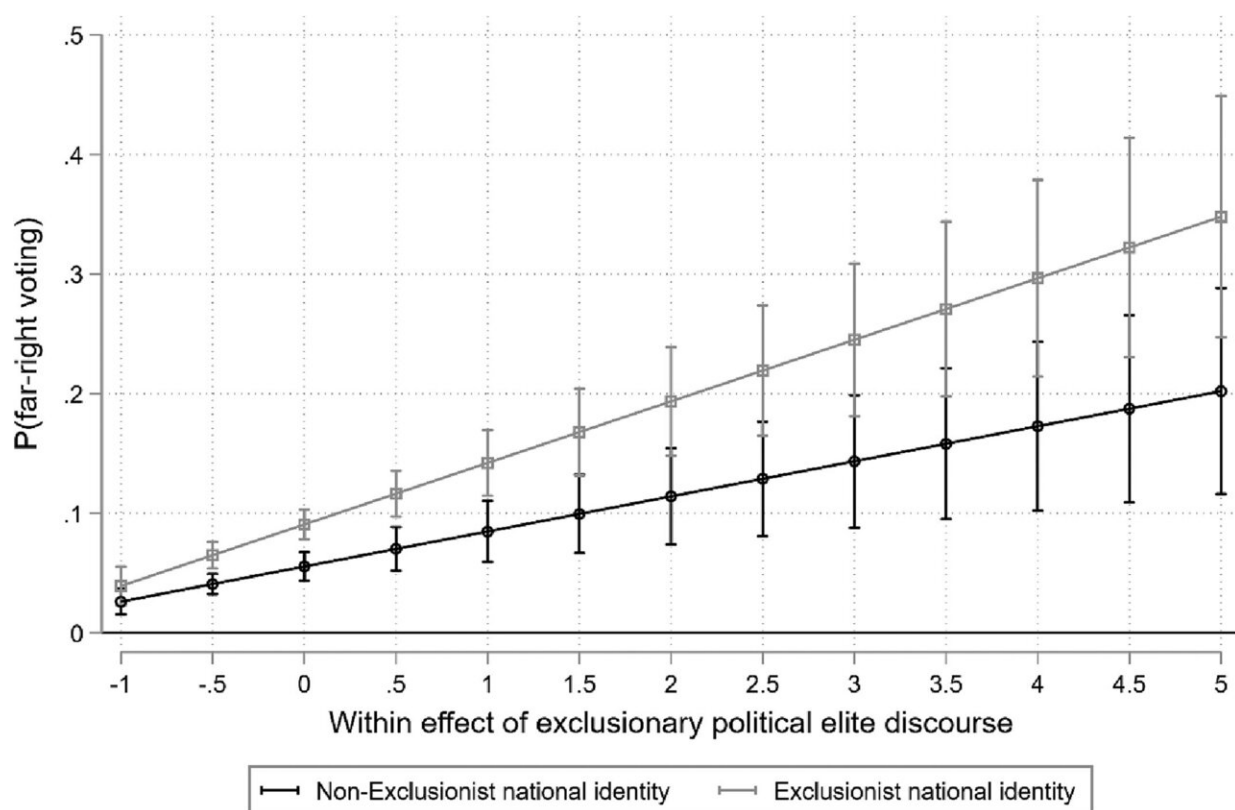


Study: Exclusionary rhetoric use by any political party increases votes for far-right parties

November 9 2023, by Sophie Zervos



Effect of exclusionary political elite discourse conditional on national identity.
Credit: *Nations and Nationalism* (2023). DOI: 10.1111/nana.12985

The rise of right-wing populist parties in Europe leads some mainstream

political parties to attempt to regain the support of voters by adopting far-right pro-nationalist and anti-immigrant stances. However, [new research](#) coming out of Germany and Israel suggests that this strategy primarily benefits far-right parties and not the political mainstream.

Antonia C. May of the GESIS—Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences and Christian S. Czymara of Tel Aviv University and Goethe University in Frankfurt combined [survey data](#) from native-born residents in 26 European countries between 1995 and 2017 with party manifesto data.

Their analysis shows that, although 53% of European respondents held narrow conceptions of national identity over the studied period, only 7% of them reported preferring a far-right party. However, when [political leaders](#) across parties adopt exclusionary rhetoric, the likelihood of voters shifting towards far-right parties increases significantly, especially among those who uphold narrow conceptions of national identity. In other words, such exclusionary political elite discourses activate individuals with nativist images of the nation.

May and Czymara test their hypothesis by calculating the proportion of pro-national and anti-immigrant positions in the electoral manifestos across all major parties in each election that took place within the study's time span. Controlling for other relevant aspects, such as national immigration rates or [unemployment rates](#) in each of the countries in the study, the authors find that, when European political elites—of any party—promote exclusionary policies, voters who agree with them go on to express a significantly stronger preference for a far-right party than when such rhetoric was not widely promoted.

Their analyses show that both a [voter's](#) ideas about who counts as a compatriot and the political elite's rhetoric influence far-right voting preferences across countries and time in Europe—but that the combination of the two aspects is particularly powerful. The paper is

[published](#) in the journal *Nations and Nationalism*.

Mainstream parties frequently attempt to recapture the support of right-wing voters by adopting more anti-immigration and nativist positions. While this strategy is often a topic of discussion in political debates and the [mass media](#), the study conducted by May and Czymara suggests that it is likely to backfire. Rather than reclaiming swing voters who previously supported far-right ideologies, this approach seems to further strengthen the support for far-right parties.

More information: Antonia C May et al, Careless whisper: Political elite discourses activate national identities for far-right voting preferences, *Nations and Nationalism* (2023). [DOI: 10.1111/nana.12985](https://doi.org/10.1111/nana.12985)

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